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ART. III. — *History of the Girondists ; or Personal Memoirs of the Patriots of the French Revolution, from Unpublished Sources*. By ALPHONSE DE LAMARTINE, Author of *Travels in the Holy Land, &c.* Translated by H. T. RYDE. London : Henry G. Bohn. 1847. 3 vols. 12mo.

THE intrinsic difficulties belonging to the department of history are strikingly illustrated in the instance of the French Revolution. It is a recent event ; it occurred in the full sight of all nations, on a theatre central and most conspicuous, and compelled the breathless attention of a world awed into silence, and gazing with the most scrutinizing and earnest curiosity upon all its scenes and actors. But where and when shall we find the truth, and nothing but the truth, relating to it ? The incidents that crowded within its limits were so horribly strange, and succeeded each other with such appalling rapidity ; its leading characters were wrought into so extravagant a frame of mind, inflamed by so ungovernable and fanatical a temper, and swept to such excesses of delirious enthusiasm ; human nature and society so far exceeded their ordinary bounds, and plunged into such frightful depths of disorder, violence, and crime ; fear and fury had such entire possession of all minds and all hearts, that it is yet impossible to contemplate the spectacle, or portray the actors, or narrate the story, without experiencing many disturbing influences on the judgment. The mind becomes agitated by the theme, the historian loses sight of the dividing line between fact and imagination, and the picture he presents is colored in the deep dyes, and glows with the fervent heat, of his own strongly excited sensibilities. When the entire people of a vast city, and even a nation, are convulsed by passions let loose in their utmost fury, a state of things is exhibited which the capacities of language must necessarily be exhausted in the attempt adequately to describe. All that, in other applications, might be regarded as highly wrought exaggeration, here fails to meet the actual demands of the subject.

Then, again, there was such a reiteration of horrors and enormities, the same terrific manifestation of human nature, perverted into preternatural dimensions of cruelty and crime, was repeated over and over again in such rapid and long suc-

cession, that the heart sickens at its details, and the mind subsides into a vague and indiscriminating feeling of horror and disgust. Innumerable events, which, if occurring separately, would impart interest to the annals of nations, were crowded and heaped up in one unnatural mass of monstrous and strange occurrences. The noise and turbulence of the scene, the bewilderment of men's judgments, and the violence of their passions, resulting from and aggravating the elements then at work, were unfavorable for the production and preservation of careful and accurate records of transactions. Moderation, truth, and justice were driven, not only from the popular assemblies and the hearts of private men, but from the journals of legislation and the tribunals of justice, and none were left to guard the altars, or perpetuate the light of history. The result is, that the French Revolution is shrouded in dark, undefined, and mysterious clouds, and all embraced within their confines is invested with a fabulous and almost demon-like aspect. The characters who figure in the tragedy are marked, indeed, by great energy and talent, but we shudder at the thought that they belong to the same species with ourselves ; as they pass before our vision, their hands are dripping with blood, and they pursue each other in swift succession to the guillotine. The shouts of popular liberty are drowned in the shrieks of assassination, rising at noonday from the open streets, and involving all parties, ages, and conditions of life. Brilliant military achievements heighten the glare of the unnatural scene. Philosophy and poetry mingle in the fray. Eloquence maddens the mob, and sways the factions of the clubs and the constituent assembly. The fine arts bring their elegances and their treasures to adorn the processions, and give splendor to the ceremonies, which dazzle and inebriate the popular masses. We see royalty swept from the loftiest elevation of feudal grandeur and pride into the deepest abasement, made to drink, from the rudest hands, the bitter cup of helplessness and misery to its very dregs, and dragged by a brutalized people, from whose breasts the human instincts of regard for innocence, virtue, and the tenderness of sex had been eradicated, to the prison and the scaffold. We see liberty rising from the ruins of long ages of absolute despotism ; for a moment, it shines with the brightest lustre, beaming with all that is most beautiful and hopeful in humanity ; but instantly its glory disappears. Its countenance exchanges

the lineaments of an angel for those of a demon. Its hands, instead of dispensing blessings to others, tear its own heart-strings, and it perishes a maniac suicide.

Such are the images which the French Revolution presents to the mind that dwells with sensibility and with a kindled imagination upon its scenes. Particular persons, acting its prominent parts, are distorted into aspects so entirely without precedent in the ordinary observation of life, and their actions are in such violation of the restraints of society and of those sentiments that usually control mankind, that we lose sight of them as individuals, and they become, as it were, generalized personifications of the awful passions, which, swaying the multitudinous populace to and fro, overwhelm all private remonstrance and compunction, and rule the hour with an irresistible and devouring fury. That race of beings, which, because it is alive to the calls of conscience, pity, and love, we call human, is no longer before us, but gigantic monsters, gorgons and chimeras dire, fill the scene. It is not to be wondered at, that history, in attempting to record such a passage in the world's annals, has found it difficult to reduce the whole into the shape and order of truth and justice, and bring it within the limits of the established laws of human nature.

The French Revolution is still too recent to be clearly discerned and justly described. It is, indeed, true of history in general, that it cannot take into its contemplation the near and the present. It is blind to what is immediately before it, and distance of time, unlike distance of space to the physical vision, is needed to give accuracy and precision to historical sight. It is not merely because prejudices and passions must have time to subside and disappear, that many years are required to elapse before events can come within the purview of history. The materials and evidences cannot be collected until long periods have supervened. The observation of every individual is necessarily limited to a narrow circle ; for all beyond that circle he is dependent upon the observations of others. They, as well as himself, see but a portion of the motives, springs of action, and particulars, of the transactions brought within their view. Different persons witness the same event. Each one sees only what is visible from his own particular stand. Prejudices, prepossessions, passions, interpose more or less a refracting and deranging medium to the vision of them all. The truth can be obtained only by col-

lecting and collating their evidence. The observations of each are corrected, enlarged, illustrated, by those of the others ; and the narrative compiled from their combined statements is more accurate and complete than the separate recollections of him who saw the most and observed the best of them all. Again, the evidence by which events and characters are illustrated is brought out, not wholly at one time, but item by item, in the long lapse of years and ages. The farther they recede in time, the more is known about them. The work to be performed by history extends through all past ages, and its greatest achievements have been accomplished by the most modern writers revealing in a new light the most ancient epochs. The French Revolution is not yet ready to be recorded. In the mean time, contributions are continually flowing in, and the materials requisite to present it in a just and full light will at last be provided. Innumerable writers, occupying various points of observation, and enjoying different degrees of advantage, are collecting and exhibiting, each in his sphere, what they can. They are all to be heard and considered, and from the whole a final result will be inscribed, in letters of truth and justice, on the permanent page of history.

The work before us, as the previous writings of the author would lead us to expect, is an extremely interesting, and may in some respects be considered as quite a valuable, addition to the means of attaining a correct knowledge of the French Revolutionary events and characters.

In the strictest sense, history wears the form of annals, and is a continuous relation of events, sustained by such official or documentary evidence, or monumental records, as render it certain and unquestionable. In this form it conveys to the mind all the satisfaction — and perhaps there is none that ought to be greater — of assurance, of feeling the solid ground of fact and truth beneath us. But the narrative of what is thus absolutely sure and certain is often too dry, meagre, and fragmentary, to suggest lively emotions to the mind. Fable and fancy have been called in to supply the deficiency. The imagination is a faculty whose sphere is of far higher utility and importance than is commonly allowed. It is needed, and unconsciously exercised actively and potently, even in the most sluggish minds, in the daily experience of life. Language does not so much convey as suggest ideas. In every

application, it seeks and needs the coöperation of the imagination. Language presents the skeleton ; imagination clothes it with flesh, and bloom, and life. Language, as used to recall the past to the knowledge of the present and the future, that is, in the form of history, can offer but a few detached facts and features ; the mind of the reader must supply, by its faculty of imagination, much that is requisite in order to answer the purpose, which is for the moment to bring the past and the dead into an ideal presence and life. And this is done by all who read with attention. When a Moses, a David, a Cæsar, is the theme of ancient scripture, whether sacred or profane, the reader creates in his own mind some sort of image or picture of his person or aspect ; and so of all characters or scenes. The accuracy, the completeness, and the interest of such ideal creations, on the part of the reader, depend of course upon his knowledge of the manners, institutions, domestic and private life, costume, and general conditions of the time and place. The child always does this, and derives from it the highest delight ; and the most mature mind does it too, although not so evidently to others, or consciously to itself. A discerning analysis would always reveal such a process in the mind of a reader or hearer ; and not in historical matters only, but in all things. Indeed, this complement supplied by the imagination is necessary, and occurs in the use of all general, or as they are called, abstract terms. Unless this is done, such terms become mere words ; they can only thus be rendered the vehicles of any sense or meaning whatever. The word *white* can answer its purpose only by recalling to the mind some image or object of which it is a quality. Indeed, the creative process of the imagination, in thus calling up images in the mind to complete the picture, of which language presents the suggestive elements, takes place in all minds, and at all times.

In reverting from these general reflections to the consideration of history, we would observe, that, in respect of the records which have come down to us from a remote antiquity, our knowledge of the interior scenes and familiar experience of private and social life is so limited, that the mind cannot fill up the outlines and supply the details to complete the brief records of history to any considerable extent. But in respect of recent eras and transactions in modern history, there promises to be an abundant supply of materials. The diffi-

culty is rather in selecting than in collecting them. Memoirs, and other forms of historical literature, in our day, give us an abundance of details of private and, in themselves separately considered, trivial circumstances, from which the imagination of the reader, if guided by a discriminating judgment, may cull the elements by whose combination the actors and the scenes can be reproduced, as in real life and visible motion. The great danger is, that, instead of leaving this task, or rather gratification, to the reader, the writer himself will undertake to draw upon his imagination. If he will confine himself to truth and fact, the more minute and full he is in his details, the better ; if, like the work before us, his history is gathered from unpublished sources, if it relates matters so private and interior as to be beyond the reach of official or public records, such as familiar conversations, domestic incidents, minutiae of dress, fashion, or person, all that we ask is, that he present nothing which has not been ascertained, to his own conviction, by the requisite and appropriate evidence. With such grounds of general confidence in the accuracy and truthfulness of a writer, the more details he gives us ; the better for the better he enables us, while we read his pages, to construct a perfect and life-like moving panorama of the scenes and characters he describes.

Whenever a new work makes its appearance, of sufficient interest to attract the notice of the public, and of any considerable intrinsic value, it is one part of the office of the critic to help the reader perform a task, which must always be accomplished before we can derive the proper benefit from books, but which, to the great discredit of the prevalent literature, is a peculiarly necessary and onerous task, at the present time. A large quantity of rubbish is to be cleared away. The reigning fashion encumbers literature with an overshadowing, but very superficial, growth of irrelevant conceits, which obscure much that deserves a better fate than to be hidden and lost. In the days of the schoolmen, there was not a greater proclivity to indulge in certain mystic combinations of terms, which then, as well as now, men were deluded enough to call philosophy. What is really no more than a play upon abstract and general terms is thought to give an air of profoundness to style, and admits a writer to the favor and privileges of a select circle of mutual admirers. To obtain the fame of a philosopher or a profound thinker, little more is

needed than to become familiar, adept, and flippant in the use of a limited number of expressions applied on all occasions and to all topics alike. Such peculiarities are to be thrown aside, as he advances, by a sensible reader, and utterly disregarded as an unfortunate superfluity and incumbrance, with which the writer has diluted his pages, and interrupted the current, and darkened the import of his narrative, his reasoning, or his reflections. Our author belongs to this school of writers, and, mistaking the nature of abstract terms, is much inclined to strain after singular collocations of them, and often appears to imagine that he has said something very deep and very bright, because, in this talismanic use of particular words and phrases, he has arranged them in strange and bold juxtaposition. We will select some instances of this kind of boy's play, but would observe by the way, that, as with other writers of real force of mind, who have fallen into this conceited and unhappy style, the commencement of his work is much more disfigured by it than the advanced portions. As Lamartine's mind becomes warm and earnest in the narrative of facts and the description of men and events, it loses sight of artificial frivolities of manner, and insensibly redeems itself from trifles.

The fact, that peculiarities of talent, taste, and genius sometimes appear to be hereditary, is stated in the following inflated and oracular style.

"The ancestors of Mirabeau speak of their domestic affairs as Plutarch of the quarrels of Marius and Sylla, of Cæsar and Pompey. We perceive the great men descending to trifling matters. Mirabeau inspired this domestic majesty and virility in his very cradle. I dwell on these details, which may seem foreign to this history, but explain it. The source of genius is often in ancestry, and the blood of descent is sometimes the prophecy of destiny." — Vol. I. p. 3.

Again, a plain and simple thought is thus expressed : —

"His youth was passed in the prisons of the state ; his passions becoming envenomed by solitude, and his intellect being rendered more acute by contact with the irons of his dungeon, where his mind lost that modesty which rarely survives the infamy of precocious punishments." — Vol. I. p. 4.

It would be no slight task to reduce into intelligible, manly common sense the purport of the following clauses.

"His faith was posterity; his conscience existed but in his thought; the fanaticism of his idea was quite human; the chilling materialism of his age had crushed in his heart the expansion, force, and craving for imperishable things. His dying words were, 'Sprinkle me with perfumes, crown me with flowers, that I may thus enter upon eternal sleep.' He was especially of his time, and his course bears no impress of infinity. Neither his character, his acts, nor his thoughts have the brand of immortality. If he had believed in God, he might have died a martyr, but he would have left behind him the religion of reason and the reign of democracy. Mirabeau, in a word, was the reason of the people; and that is not yet the faith of humanity!" — Vol. I. p. 7.

Of Rousseau Lamartine thus lucidly expresses himself: —

"He had been the tribune of nature, the Gracchus of philosophy — he had not produced the history of institutions, only its vision — but that vision descended from heaven and returned thither." — Vol. I. p. 15.

But it will suffice to indicate the character of the extraneous matter with which he has encumbered and obscured his work, to quote the following, which constitutes an entire section of the First Book. The reader who demands that language shall have some meaning in it will find himself unable to interpret this oracular passage, and whenever he encounters similar effusions, will pass over and set them aside, just as he would brush from the page any foreign substance that might be thrown upon it.

"Human thought, like God, makes the world in its own image.

"Thought was revived by a philosophical age.

"It had to transform the social world.

"The French Revolution was therefore in its essence a sublime and impassioned spirituality. It had a divine and universal ideal. This is the reason why its passion spread beyond the frontiers of France. Those who limit mutilate it. It was the accession of three moral sovereignties: —

"The sovereignty of right over force;

"The sovereignty of intelligence over prejudices;

"The sovereignty of people over governments.

"Revolution in rights; equality.

"Revolution in ideas; reasoning substituted for authority.

"Revolution in facts; the reign of the people.

"A Gospel of social rights.

"A Gospel of duties, a charter of humanity.

"France declared itself the apostle of this creed. In this war of ideas France had allies everywhere, and even on thrones themselves." — Vol. I. p. 12.

The following sentence concludes another section.

"The earth cannot remain without an altar, and God alone is strong enough against God." — Vol. I. p. 156.

Surely the force of folly can no farther go. All that is necessary to expose and explode such a style of writing, such habits of language, such pretending and mystic phrases as these, is to pause and analyze them. The process of attempting to eliminate their meaning will show what a mere vapor of words they are. It is because readers, as well as writers, fall into a habit of using words without rigidly insisting upon knowing what they mean, that the literature of an age becomes visionary, pedantic, and delusive, at once feeble and enfeebling. The great defect in our systems of education, in schools, colleges, and universities, is in the department of language, particularly our vernacular tongue. If the young were trained to habits of severe precision in the use of words; if the text-books employed, the oral teachings given, and the examples held up, were scrupulously guarded against all vague, misty, and obscure expressions, and the pen were always, with prompt severity, drawn through every passage that did not give forth its meaning full and clear, we should soon be relieved from the faults that emasculate our literature, from the mortifying impositions that invest unmeaning phrases with the pretensions of philosophy, and, by filling the popular mind with a cloud of general terms which convey no real sense, involve in darkness all practical moral judgments, and threaten to obliterate the lessons of experience, dissolve the obligations of society, and undermine the foundations of national and civil law, order, and right.

As we have before remarked, these peculiarities deform the first few books much more than the subsequent ones. They are mere affectations, superficial appendages, assumed to conciliate a prevalent fashion, and to obtain currency in a literary *coterie* which has, unhappily, obtained for a brief hour possession of some of the upper seats of criticism and taste. The moment men begin to grow earnest and lose themselves in their work, affectation disappears, and every motion becomes efficient and graceful, because natural and unconstrained. This is the case with Lamartine. As he gets warm in his work,

paradoxes, fanciful combinations of phrases, affected profoundness of abstract and oracular expressions, are forgotten. He rises above their sphere into a clear, strong, manly, but most brilliant, style of narrative and description. No writer excels him in minute, graphic, lifelike delineations of characters, scenes, and actions. It is excellence in these points that constitutes the charm of the work before us, and gives it the highest value and interest.

We could not say any thing which would so effectually commend these eloquent and attractive volumes as to lay before our readers a few of the portraits of persons, and pictures of scenes, with which they are adorned and enriched from beginning to end. In the following passages, words are made to rival the pencil.

“ Still deeper in the shade, and behind the chief of the National Assembly, a man almost unknown began to move, agitated by uneasy thoughts which seemed to forbid him to be silent and unmoved ; he spoke on all occasions, and attacked all speakers indifferently, including Mirabeau himself. Driven from the tribune, he ascended it next day : overwhelmed with sarcasm, coughed down, disowned by all parties, lost amongst the eminent champions who fixed public attention, he was incessantly beaten, but never dispirited. It might have been said, that an inward and prophetic genius revealed to him the vanity of all talent, and the omnipotence of a firm will and unwearied patience, and that an inward voice said to him, ‘ These men who despise thee are thine : all the changes of this Revolution, which now will not deign to look upon thee, will eventually terminate in thee, for thou hast placed thyself in the way like the inevitable excess, in which all impulse ends.’

“ This man was Robespierre.

“ Alone perhaps among all these men who opened at Versailles the first scene of this vast drama, he foresaw the termination ; like the soul, whose seat in the human frame philosophers have not discovered, the thought of an entire people sometimes concentrates itself in the individual the least known in the great mass. We should not despise any, for the finger of Destiny marks in the soul and not upon the brow. Robespierre had nothing, neither birth, nor genius, nor exterior which should point him out to men’s notice. There was nothing conspicuous about him ; his limited talent had only shone at the bar or in provincial academies ; a few verbal harangues filled with a tame and almost rustic philosophy, some bits of cold and affected poetry, had vainly displayed his name in the insignificance of the literary productions

of the day : he was more than unknown, he was mediocre and contemned. His features presented nothing which could attract attention, when gazing round in a large assembly : there was no sign in visible characters of this power which was all within ; he was the last word of the Revolution, but no one could read him.

“ Robespierre’s figure was small, his limbs feeble and angular, his step irresolute, his attitudes affected, his gestures destitute of harmony or grace ; his voice, rather shrill, aimed at oratorical inflections, but only produced fatigue and monotony ; his forehead was good, but small and extremely projecting above the temples, as if the mass and embarrassed movement of his thoughts had enlarged it by their efforts ; his eyes, much covered by their lids and very sharp at the extremities, were deeply buried in the cavities of their orbits ; they gave out a soft blue hue, but it was vague and unfixed, like a steel reflector on which a light glances ; his nose straight and small was very wide at the nostrils, which were high and too expanded ; his mouth was large ; his lips thin and disagreeably contracted at each corner ; his chin small and pointed ; his complexion yellow and livid, like that of an invalid or a man worn out by vigils and meditations. The habitual expression of this visage was that of superficial serenity on a serious mind, and a smile wavering betwixt sarcasm and condescension. There was softness, but of a sinister character. The prevailing characteristic of this countenance was the prodigious and continual tension of brow, eyes, mouth, and all the facial muscles ; in regarding him, it was perceptible that the whole of his features, like the labor of his mind, converged incessantly on a single point with such power that there was no waste of will in his temperament, and he appeared to foresee all he desired to accomplish, as though he had already the reality before his eyes.

“ Such, then, was the man destined to absorb in himself all those men, and make them his victims after he had used them as his instruments. He was of no party, but of all parties which in their turn served his ideal of the Revolution. In this his power consisted, for parties paused, but he never did. He placed this ideal as an end to reach in every revolutionary movement, and advanced towards it with those who sought to attain it ; then, this goal reached, he placed it still further off, and again marched forward with other men, continually advancing, without ever deviating, ever pausing, ever retreating. The Revolution, decimated in its progress, must one day or other inevitably arrive at a last stage, and he desired it should end in himself. He was the entire incorporation of the Revolution, — principles, thoughts, passions, impulses. Thus incorporating himself wholly with it,

he compelled it one day to incorporate itself in him — that day was a distant one.” — Vol. I. pp. 29 – 32.

The two extracts that follow present scenes of a character quite in contrast with each other, but strikingly and truly illustrating the forms in which the spirit of the Revolution displayed itself at an early and a later stage.

“ On the 11th of July, the departmental and municipal authorities went in state to the barrier of Charenton, to receive the mortal remains of Voltaire, which were placed on the ancient site of the Bastille, like a conqueror on his trophies; his coffin was exposed to public gaze, and a pedestal was formed for it of stones torn from the foundations of this ancient stronghold of tyranny; and thus Voltaire when dead triumphed over those stones which had triumphed over and confined him when living. On one of the blocks was the inscription, ‘*Receive on this spot, where despotism once fettered thee, the honors decreed to thee by thy country.*’

“ The next day, when the rays of a brilliant sun had dissipated the mists of the night, an immense concourse of people followed the car that bore Voltaire to the Pantheon. This car was drawn by twelve white horses, harnessed four abreast; their manes plaited with flowers and golden tassels, and the reins held by men dressed in antique costumes, like those depicted on the medals of ancient triumphs. On the car was a funeral couch, extended on which was a statue of the philosopher, crowned with a wreath. The National Assembly, the departmental and municipal bodies, the constituted authorities, the magistrates, and the army, surrounded, preceded, and followed the sarcophagus. The boulevards, the streets, the public places, the windows, the roofs of houses, even the trees, were crowded with spectators; and the suppressed murmurs of vanquished intolerance could not restrain this feeling of enthusiasm. Every eye was riveted on the car; for the new school of ideas felt that it was the proof of their victory that was passing before them, and that philosophy remained mistress of the field of battle.

“ The details of this ceremony were magnificent; and in spite of its profane and theatrical trappings, the features of every man that followed the car wore the expression of joy, arising from an intellectual triumph. A large body of cavalry, who seemed to have now offered their arms at the shrine of intelligence, opened the march. Then followed the muffled drums, to whose notes were added the roar of the artillery that formed a part of the cortège. The scholars of the colleges of Paris, the patriotic societies, the battalions of the national guard, the workmen of the

different public journals, the persons employed to demolish the foundations of the Bastille ; some bearing a portable press, which struck off different inscriptions in honor of Voltaire, as the procession moved on ; others carrying the chains, the collars, and bolts, and bullets found in the dungeons and arsenals of the state prisons ; and lastly, busts of Voltaire, Rousseau, and Mirabeau, marched between the troops and the populace. On a litter was displayed the *procès-verbal* of the electors of '89, that *Hegyra* of the insurrection. On another stand, the citizens of the Faubourg Saint Antoine exhibited a plan in relief of the Bastille, the flag of the donjon, and a young girl, in the costume of an Amazon, who had fought at the siege of this fortress. Here and there, pikes surmounted with the Phrygian cap of liberty arose above the crowd, and on one of them was a scroll bearing the inscription, '*From this steel sprung Liberty !*'

"All the actors and actresses of the theatres of Paris followed the statue of him who for sixty years had inspired them ; the titles of his principal works were inscribed on the sides of a pyramid that represented his immortality. His statue, formed of gold and crowned with laurel, was borne on the shoulders of citizens, wearing the costumes of the nations and the times whose manners and customs he had depicted ; and the seventy volumes of his works were contained in a casket, also of gold. The members of the learned bodies and of the principal academies of the kingdom surrounded this ark of philosophy. Numerous bands of music, some marching with the troops, others stationed along the road of the procession, saluted the car as it passed with loud bursts of harmony, and filled the air with the enthusiastic strains of liberty. The procession stopped before the principal theatres, a hymn was sung in honor of his genius, and the car then resumed its march. On their arrival at the quai that bears his name, the car stopped before the house of M. de Villette, where Voltaire had breathed his last, and where his heart was preserved. Evergreen shrubs, garlands of leaves, and wreaths of roses decorated the front of the house, which bore the inscription, '*His fame is everywhere, and his heart is here.*' Young girls dressed in white, and wreaths of flowers on their heads, covered the steps of an amphitheatre erected before the house. Madame de Villette, to whom Voltaire had been a second father, in all the splendor of her beauty, and the pathos of her tears, advanced and placed the noblest of all his wreaths, the wreath of filial affection, on the head of the great philosopher.

"At this moment the crowd burst into one of the hymns of the poet Chenier, who, up to his death, most of all men cherished the memory of Voltaire. Madame de Villette and the young

girls of the amphitheatre descended into the street, now strewed with flowers, and walked before the car. The Théâtre Français, then situated in the Faubourg St. Germain, had erected a triumphal arch on its peristyle. On each pillar a medallion was fixed, bearing in letters of gilt bronze the title of the principal dramas of the poet; on the pedestal of the statue erected before the door of the theatre was written, '*He wrote Irène at eighty-three years; at seventeen he wrote Œdipus.*'

"The immense procession did not arrive at the Pantheon until ten o'clock at night, for the day had not been sufficiently long for this triumph.

"If we judge of men by what they have *done*, then Voltaire is incontestably the greatest writer of modern Europe. No one has caused, through the powerful influence of his genius alone, and the perseverance of his will, so great a commotion in the minds of men; his pen aroused a world, and has shaken a far mightier empire than that of Charlemagne, the European empire of a theocracy. His genius was not *force*, but *light*. Heaven had destined him, not to destroy, but to illuminate, and wherever he trod, light followed him, for reason (which is *light*) had destined him to be first her poet, then her apostle, and lastly her idol." — Vol. i. pp. 149 – 152.

"The five hundred and seventy-five carcasses of the Châtelet and the Conciergerie were piled up in heaps on the Pont-du-Change. At night, troops of children, revelling in these three days' murders, and with whom dead carcasses had become things of sport, lighted up small lamps by these heaps of slain, and danced the Carmagnole, whilst the Marseillaise was sung all over the city. Lamps, lanterns, pitch torches, mingled their pale lights with that of the moon, which beamed on these heaps of victims — these hacked trunks — these severed heads — these pools of blood. The same night, Henriot, spy and swindler under the monarchy, assassin and executioner under the people, at the head of a band of twenty or thirty men, directed and executed the massacre of ninety-two priests of the seminary of Saint Firmin. Henriot's satellites, pursuing the priests through corridors and into cells, flung them, still alive, out of the windows on to a forest of pikes, spits, and bayonets, which transfixed them when they fell. Women, to whom the butchers then resigned them, finished the bloody work with billets of wood, and then dragged the mangled bodies through the kennels. The same scenes polluted the cloisters of the Bernardins.

"Yet already in Paris victims were not in sufficient quantity to satisfy the thirst excited by these ninety-two hours of massacre.

"The prisons were empty. Henriot and the butchers, more than two hundred in number, reinforced by the wretches recruited in the prisons, went to the Bicêtre with seven pieces of cannon, which the Commune allowed them to take with impunity.

"Bicêtre, a vast sewer, wherein flowed all the refuse in the kingdom, in order to purify the population of lunatics, mendicants, or incorrigible criminals, contained three thousand five hundred prisoners. Their blood contained nothing of political taint; but, pure or impure, it was still more blood! The ruffians forced in the gates of the Bicêtre, drove in the dungeon doors with cannon, dragged out the prisoners, and began a slaughter, which endured five nights and five days. Vainly did the Commune send commissaries, — vainly did Pétion himself harangue the assassins. They hardly ceased from their *work* to listen to the admonitions of the mayor. To words without force the people only lend a respect without obedience. The cutthroats only paused before a want of occupation. Next day, the same band, of about two hundred and fifty men, armed with guns, pikes, axes, clubs, attacked the hospital of the Salpêtrière, at the same time a hospital and a prison, which contained only prostitutes, — a place of correction for the old, reformation for the young, and asylum for those still bordering on infancy. After having massacred thirty-five of the most aged women, they forced the dormitories of the others, whom they made the victims of their brutality, killing those who resisted, and carrying off with them in triumph young girls, from ten to fourteen years of age, the foul prey of debauchery saturated with blood.

"Whilst these proscriptions created consternation throughout Paris, the Assembly in vain sent commissaries to harangue the people at the doors of the prisons. The assassins would not even suspend their work to lend an ear to the official harangues. Vainly did the minister of the interior, Roland, groaning over his own impotency, write to Santerre to use force, in order to assure the safety of the prisons. It was three days before Santerre appeared to demand of the council-general of the Commune authority to repress the bloodhounds, now become dangerous to those who had let them loose on their enemies. The ruffians, reeking in gore, came insolently to claim of the municipal authorities payment for their murders. Tallien and his colleagues dared not refuse the price of these days' *work*, and entered on the registers of the Commune of Paris these salaries, scarcely concealed under the most evident titles and pretexts. Santerre and his detachments had the utmost difficulty in driving back to their foul dens these hordes, greedy for carnage, — men who, living on crime for seven days, drinking quantities of wine mingled with

gunpowder, intoxicated with the fumes of blood, had become excited to such a pitch of physical insanity, that they were unable to take repose. The fever of extermination wholly absorbed them. Some of them, marked down with disgust by their neighbours, left their abodes and enrolled as volunteers, or, insatiable for crime, joined bands of assassins going to Orleans, Lyons, Meaux, Rheims, Versailles, to continue the proscriptions of Paris. Amongst these were Charlot, Grizon, Hamin, the weaver Rodi, Henriot, the journeyman butcher Alaigre, and a negro named Delorme, brought to Paris by Fournier l'Américain. This black, untiring in murder, killed with his own hands more than two hundred prisoners during the three days and three nights of this fearful slaughter, with no cessation beyond the brief space he allowed himself to recruit his strength with wine. His shirt fastened round his waist, leaving his trunk bare, his hideous features, his black skin red with splashes of blood, his bursts of savage laughter, displaying his large white teeth at every death-blow he dealt, made this man the symbol of murder and the avenger of his race. It was one blood exhausting another; extermination punishing the European for his attempts on Africa. This negro, who was invariably seen with a head recently cut off in his hand, during all the popular convulsions of the Revolution, was two years afterwards arrested during the days of Prairial, carrying at the end of a pike the head of Féraud, the deputy, and died at last the death he had so frequently inflicted upon others.

“Such were the days of September. The ditches of Clamart, the catacombs of the Barrière St. Jacques, alone knew the number of the victims. Some said ten thousand, others only two or three thousand.” — Vol. II. pp. 139 – 141.

Among the portraitures of character, none, perhaps, exceed in interest those of Robespierre and Louis Philippe. The former is particularly curious, as showing what reversed decisions history is sometimes called upon to give; and the latter from the strange contrast between the early career of Louis Philippe, and the influence he is now exerting upon the institutions of Europe.

“The life of Robespierre bore witness to the disinterestedness of his ideas — his life was the most eloquent of his speeches; and if his master, Jean Jacques Rousseau, had quitted his cottage of the Chaumettes or Ernonville to become the legislator of humanity, he could not have led a more retired or more simple existence; and this poverty was the more meritorious as it was voluntary. Every day the object of attempts at corruption from the Court, the party of Mirabeau, the Lameths, and the Girond-

ists, during the two Assemblies, he had fortune within his reach, and disdained to open his hand ; summoned by the election to fill the post of public accuser and judge at Paris, he had resigned and refused every thing to live in honest and proud indigence. All his fortune, and that of his brother and sister, consisted in a few small farms in Artois ; the farmers of which, related to his family, and very poor, paid their rents but irregularly. His salary as deputy, during the Constituent Assembly and the Convention, supported three persons, and he was sometimes forced to borrow from his landlord or his friends. His debts, which, after six years' residence in Paris, only amounted to 4000 francs (£ 160) at his death, attest his frugality.

" His life was that of an honest artisan ; he lodged in the Rue St. Honoré, at the house now No. 396, opposite the Church of the Assumption. This house, low, and in a court, surrounded by sheds filled with timber and plants, had an almost rustic appearance. It consisted of a parlour opening on to the court, and communicating with a *salon* that looked into a small garden. From this *salon* a door led into a small study in which was a piano. There was a winding staircase to the first floor, on which the master of the house lived, and thence to the apartment of Robespierre.

" This house belonged to a cabinet-maker, named Duplay.

" Love also attached his heart, where toil, poverty, and retirement had fixed his life. Eléonore Duplay, the eldest daughter of his host, inspired Robespierre with a more serious attachment than her sisters. This feeling, rather predilection than passion, was more reasonable on the part of Robespierre, more ardent and simple on the part of the young girl. This affection afforded him tenderness without torment, happiness without distraction ; it was the love that filled a man plunged all day in the agitation of public life — repose of the heart after mental weariness. ' A noble soul,' said Robespierre of her ; ' she would know equally how to die as how to love.' She had been surnamed Cornelia. This mutual affection, approved of by the family, commanded universal respect from its purity. They lived in the same house as betrothed, not as lovers. Robespierre had demanded the young girl's hand from her parents, and they had promised it to him.

" ' The total want of fortune, and the uncertainty of the morrow, prevented him from marrying her until the destiny of France was determined on,' he said ; ' but he only awaited the moment when the Revolution should be determined and wholly concluded, in order to retire from the turmoil and strife, and marry her whom he loved, retiring to live in Artois, in one of

the farms which he had saved from amongst the possessions of his family, there to mingle his obscure happiness in the common lot of his family.

“Of all Eléonore’s sisters, Robespierre preferred Elizabeth, the youngest of the three, whom his fellow-townsmen and colleague, Lebas, sought in marriage, and subsequently espoused. This young lady, to whom the friendship of Robespierre cost the life of her husband eleven months after their union, has survived for more than half a century since that period, without having once recanted her entire devotion to Robespierre, and without having comprehended the maledictions of the world against this brother of her youth, who appears still to her memory so pure, so virtuous, so gentle !

“The chamber of the deputy of Arras contained only a wooden bedstead covered with blue damask ornamented with white flowers, a table, and four straw-bottomed chairs. This apartment served him at once for a study and dormitory. His papers, his reports, the manuscripts of his discourses, written by himself, in a regular but laborious handwriting, with many marks of erasure, were placed carefully on deal shelves against the wall. A few chosen books were also ranged thereon. A volume of Jean Jacques Rousseau or of Racine was generally open upon his table, and attested his philosophical and literary predilection for these two writers.

“It was there Robespierre passed the greater part of his day, occupied in preparing his discourses. He only went out in the morning to attend the meetings of the Assembly, and at seven in the evening those of the Jacobins. His costume, even at the period when the demagogues affected the slovenliness and disorder of indigence, in order to flatter the people, was clean, decent, and precise, as that of a man who respects himself in the eyes of others. His white powdered hair, turned up in clusters over his temples, a bright blue coat, buttoned over his hips, open over the breast to display a white vest, short yellow-colored breeches, white stockings, and shoes with silver buckles, formed his invariable costume during the whole of his public life.

“It was said that he desired, by thus never varying the style or color of his garments, to make the same impression of himself in the sight and imagination of the people, as a medal of his face would have caused.” — Vol. II. pp. 194 – 197.

“The Duc de Chartres (Louis Philippe) was the eldest son of the Duc d’Orléans. Born in the cradle of liberty, nurtured in patriotism by his father, he had not even a choice in his opinions

— his education had made that choice for him. He had imbibed the air of the Revolution, but not of the Palais Royal, that focus of the domestic irregularities and political schemes of his father. His youth was passed studiously and virtuously in the seclusion of Belle-Chasse and Passy, where Madame de Genlis directed the education of the princes of the house of Orléans. Never did a woman so well mingle in herself intrigue and virtue, or associate an ambiguous position with most austere precepts. Hatred to the mother, the favorite of the father, Mentor of the children, at the same time democrat, and yet friend of the prince, her pupils left her hands combining in themselves the amalgam of prince and citizen. She fashioned their mind on her own. She imparted to them much intelligence, many principles, and great prudence. She, moreover, insinuated into their dispositions that address amongst men, and that plasticity amongst events, which for ever betoken the imprint of the hand of a skilful woman in the characters she has handled. The Duc de Chartres had no youth. Education suppressed this age in the pupils of Madame de Genlis. Reflection, study, premeditation of every thought and act, replaced nature by study, and instinct by will. She made men, but they were factitious men. At seventeen years of age the young prince had the maturity of advanced years. Colonel in 1791, he had already gained two civic crowns from the city of Vendôme, where he was in garrison, for having saved, at the peril of his life, the lives of two priests in a riot, and a citizen from drowning. Constant in his attendance at the sittings of the Constituent Assembly, affiliated by his father to the Jacobins, he was present in the tribunes at the displays of popular assemblies. He seemed himself carried away by the passions he studied, but he always controlled his apparent excitement. Always sufficiently in the stream of the day to be national, he was still sufficiently out of it not to sully his future destiny. His family was the greater portion of his patriotism. At the news of the suppression of the right of primogeniture, he embraced his brother, saying, 'Good law, which lets brothers love each other without jealousy! It only enjoins me what my heart had done before. You all know that nature had created this law between us.' War had fortunately led him to camps when the blood of the Revolution was pure. He signalized himself first under Luckner, in Belgium; and, at twenty-three years of age, had followed him to Metz. Called on by Servan to take the command of Strasbourg, he replied, 'I am too young to shut myself up in such a place; I beg to be left with the army on service.' Kellermann, who succeeded Luckner, saw his valor, and confided to him a brigade of twelve battalions of infantry and twelve squadrons of horse.

“ The Duc de Chartres had been welcomed by the old soldiers as a prince, by the new ones as a patriot, by all as a comrade. His intrepidity did not carry him away ; he controlled it, and it left him that quickness of perception and that coolness so essential to a general ; amidst the hottest fire he neither quickened nor slackened his pace, for his ardor was as much the effect of reflection as of calculation, and as grave as duty. His stature was lofty, his frame well knit, his appearance serious and thoughtful. The elevation of his brow, the blue hue of his eyes, the oval face, and the majestic, though somewhat heavy, outline of his chin, reminded every one strongly of the Bourbon family. The bend of his neck, the modest carriage, the mouth slightly drawn down at each corner, the penetrating glance, the winning smile, and the ready repartee, gained him the attention of the people. His familiarity — martial with the officers, soldierly with the soldiers, patriotic with the citizens — caused them to forgive him for being a prince. But beneath the exterior of a soldier of the people lurked the *arrière pensée* of a prince of the blood ; and he plunged into all the events of the Revolution with the entire yet skilful *abandon* of a master mind ; and it seemed as though he knew beforehand that events dash to pieces those who resist them, but that revolutions, like the ocean's waves, often restore men to the spot whence they tore them. To perform that skilfully which the exigency of the moment required, and to trust to the future and his birth for the rest, was the whole of his policy, and Machiavel could not have counselled him more skilfully than his own nature. His star never lighted him but a few steps in advance, and he neither wished nor asked of it more lustre, for his only ambition was to learn to wait. Time was his providence ; and he was born to disappear in the great convulsions of his country, to survive crises, outwit the already wearied parties, satisfy and arrest revolution. Men feared, in spite of his bravery and his exalted enthusiasm for his country, to catch a glimpse of a throne raised upon its own ruins and by the hands of a republic. This presentiment, which invariably precedes great names and destinies, seemed to reveal to the army that of all the leaders of the Revolution, he might one day be the most useful or the most fatal to liberty.” — Vol. II. pp. 159 – 161.

In connection with the last extract, the following passage is of curious interest.

“ About this time the Duc de Chartres (since King of the French) presented himself at the audience of the minister of war, Servan, to complain of some injustice that had been shown him. Servan, unwell and in bed, listened carelessly to the complaints

of the young prince. Danton was present, and seemed to possess more authority at the war office than the minister himself. He took the Duc de Chartres aside, and said to him, 'What do you do here? You see that Servan is a phantom of a minister, unable either to serve or to injure you. Call on me to-morrow, and I will arrange your business for you.' The next day, when the Duc de Chartres went to the chancery, Danton received him with a sort of paternal *brusquerie*: 'Well, young man,' said he, 'what do I learn? I am assured that your language resembles murmurs; that you blame the great measures of government; that you express compassion for the victims, and hatred for the executioners. Beware, patriotism does not admit of lukewarmness, and you have to obtain pardon for your great name.' The young prince replied, with a firmness above his years, that the army looked with horror on bloodshed anywhere but on the battle-field, and that the massacres of September seemed in his eyes to dishonor liberty. 'You are too young to judge of these events,' returned Danton, with the air and accent of superiority; 'to comprehend them you must be in our place; for the future, be silent. Return to the army; fight bravely, but do not rashly expose your life,—you have many years before you. France does not love a republic; she has the habits, the weaknesses, the need of a monarchy. After our storms, she will return to it either through her vices or necessities, and you will be king. Adieu, young man; remember the prediction of Danton.' "—Vol. II. pp. 173, 174.

If the foregoing anecdote could be literally credited, it would disclose a truly wonderful penetration of the remote future on the part of Danton. He is represented by Lamartine as possessing the strongest powers of discernment, and appears upon the whole, as his portrait is drawn by our author, to have been, in prompt and comprehensive judgment, and in decision and manly force of genius, the master spirit of the drama. But no depth of penetration, no profoundness of observation, no knowledge of the workings of human passions, or of the elementary ingredients of natural character, can be imagined great enough to have enabled Danton to look with so clear a vision through the storms and vicissitudes which impended over the civilized world, and convulsed Europe for thirty years, and beyond them all to behold the later fortunes and present elevation of the young Duc de Chartres.

This is one of those cases in which the interest of history is derived from the introduction of statements that cannot be

officially authenticated, and in reference to which confidence in the historian is felt to be of essential and incalculable importance. It is pleasing to contemplate, in sprightly relief from the graver public incidents of the narrative, private conversations, familiar occurrences, and domestic incidents. For these the writer cannot, at the foot of the page, or in the margin, cite his authorities. His own industry, discrimination, and truthfulness must be our only reliance. If we are assured that he possesses such traits, then our confidence is extended to him, and we enjoy the highest satisfaction in the details of his story. If history is to descend at all into the interior spheres of private life, and trace the connection between public events and the personal circumstances and social relations of those who occasion and act in them, such incidents and anecdotes as that just given, and others which abound in these volumes, must be allowed admission. Although depending, as they necessarily must, to a great degree, upon hearsay evidence, living only in the voices of irresponsible rumor, descending from lips to lips, mere floating traditions, and liable, of course, to exaggeration, embellishment, and variation, more than any thing else they give the form and pressure, the hue and spirit, the tone and life, of the times. And while the interest of modern history is thus heightened, its authenticity and authority will not, in the practical result, be essentially weakened by the introduction of such minute and private details. In reference to every important transaction and signal era, like that of the French Revolution, as we have before observed, large numbers of works will always be written, by different individuals, from different points of view, illustrating minutely the characters who figured in the scene. Personal reminiscences, memoirs, correspondences, journals, diaries, reports of conversations, will, in greater or less abundance, be brought before the public; and by the exercise of a cautious and enlightened judgment, every reader may become quite well qualified to discriminate for himself, and, guided by internal indications, to discern the stamp of naturalness and truth, and thus bestow his confidence aright.

By what particular evidence the conversation of Danton with the Duc de Chartres was made known to Lamartine, we are not informed. In his Advertisement he says, in general : —

“ We have written after having scrupulously investigated facts and characters : we do not ask to be credited on our mere word only. Although we have not encumbered our work with notes, quotations, and documentary testimony, we have not made one assertion unauthorized by authentic memoirs, by unpublished manuscripts, by autograph letters, which the families of the most conspicuous persons have confided to our care, or by oral and well-confirmed statements gathered from the lips of the last survivors of this great epoch.”

One of the most interesting and instructive uses of history is to suggest to the mind speculations as to what would have been the effect upon the course of events, — how far that course would have been varied, — had certain particular incidents been omitted, or differently treated and directed. Perhaps the moral and social elements developed in the French Revolution had been so long gathering, and had worked so deeply into the very essence of the popular associations and passions, that nothing could have availed to check or essentially divert their course, or prevent their final explosion. Our author, in alluding to the attempt of Robespierre and others to procure the utter abolition of the death-penalty, at an early stage of the movement, thus ponders over the consequences that might have ensued, had the attempt succeeded.

“ The discussion on the abolition of the punishment of death presented to Adrien Duport an opportunity to pronounce in favor of the abolition one of those orations which survive time, and which protest, in the name of reason and philosophy, against the blindness and atrocity of criminal legislation. He demonstrated with the most profound logic, that society, by reserving to itself the right of homicide, justifies it to a certain extent in the murderer, and that the means most efficacious for preventing murder and making it infamous was to evince its own horror of the crime. Robespierre, who subsequently was fated to allow of unlimited immolation, demanded that society should be disarmed of the power of putting to death. If the prejudices of jurists had not prevailed over the wholesome doctrines of moral philosophy, who can say how much blood might not have been spared in France ? ” — Vol. I. p. 43.

Perhaps, as has just been intimated, the internal fires had so long been burning in the secret passions of the people, and had rendered the entire substance of society so combustible, that nothing could have prevented the flame from breaking forth,

and involving all in a destructive conflagration. When the question of the death-penalty was discussed, it may have been too late to stay, by paper barriers in the form of votes, the tide of violence that was already swelling into a deluge. Still, it is certain that that deluge could never have risen so high as it did, had not legalized bloodshed and judicial murder opened their sluices upon the scene. It would have been an interesting experiment to see how long, or how far, a political revolution could be conducted, based upon the principle of the inviolability of human life. It would have proceeded, we may be sure, more slowly and moderately. Men of extreme views, and disposed to violence, would have been longer working themselves into popular favor. In a revolution, and indeed at all times, the only ground upon which a political leader can stand is a state of the public temperament in sympathy with his own. The only way in which he can control the people is to infect them with his own passions. He who would sustain violent measures must first madden the populace. This was well understood by the bloody spirits who guided the French Revolution, and drove it on to its horrid issues. How well it was understood, the following passage from Lamartine shows.

“Chabot and Grangeneuve were of the council chambers of Charenton. One evening they left together one of these conferences, downcast and discouraged by the hesitations and temporizing of the conspirators. Grangeneuve was walking with his eyes cast to the ground, and in silence. ‘What are you thinking of?’ inquired Chabot. ‘I was thinking,’ replied the Girondist, ‘that these delays enervate the Revolution and the country. I think, that if the people give any time to royalty, they are lost. I think there is but the assigned hour to revolutions, and that they who allow it to escape will never recover it, and will owe an account hereafter to God and posterity. Well, Chabot, the people will never rise of themselves — they require some moving power; how is this to be given to them? I have reflected, and at last I think I have discovered the means; but shall I find a man equally capable of the necessary firmness and secrecy to aid me?’ ‘Speak,’ said Chabot: ‘I am capable of any thing to destroy what I hate.’ ‘Then,’ continued Grangeneuve, ‘blood intoxicates the people: there is always pure blood in the cradle of all great revolutions, from that of Lucretia to that of William Tell and Sydney. For statesmen revolutions are a theory, but to the people they are a vengeance; yet to drive them to vengeance we

must show them a victim. Since the court refuses us this consolation, we must ourselves immolate it to the cause — a victim must appear to fall beneath the blows of the aristocracy, and it must be some man whom the court shall be supposed to have sacrificed, be one of its known enemies, and a member of the Assembly, so that the attempt against the national representative may be added in the act to the assassination of a citizen. This assassination must be committed at the very doors of the château, that it may bring the vengeance down as near as possible. But who shall be this citizen? Myself! I am weak in words, my life is useless to liberty, my death will be of advantage to it, my dead body will be the standard of insurrection and victory to the people!

“Chabot listened to Grangeneuve with admiration. ‘It is the genius of patriotism that inspires you,’ he said; ‘and if two victims are requisite, I will be the second.’ ‘You shall be more than that,’ replied Grangeneuve; ‘you shall be, not the assassin, for I implore you to put me to death — but my murderer. This very night I will walk alone and unarmed in the most lonely and darkest spot near the Louvre; place there two devoted patriots armed with daggers; let us agree on a signal; they shall then stab me, and I will fall without a cry. They will fly — my body will be found next day. You shall accuse the court, and the vengeance of the people will do the rest.’

“Chabot, as fanatic and as decided as Grangeneuve to calumniate the king by the death of a patriot, swore to his friend that he would commit this odious deceit of vengeance. The rendezvous of the assassination was fixed, the hour appointed, the signal agreed upon. Grangeneuve returned home, made his will, prepared for death, and went at the concerted moment. After walking there for two hours, he saw some men approach, whom he mistook for the appointed assassins. He made the signal agreed on, and awaited the blow. None was struck. Chabot had hesitated to complete it, either from want of resolution or instruments. The victim had not failed to the sacrifice, it was only the murderer.” — Vol. II. pp. 23, 24.

The first drop of blood spilled in the movement gave it, as it was thus clearly perceived that it would, a demoniac energy that nothing could withstand; and from that moment it rushed on until humanity and religion were alike prostrated. An awful demonstration was thus given of the truth, that the introduction of violence in any form depraves and destroys a reformation.

On another subject, a question was taken and a decision

made, which awaken the same interesting speculations in the mind of a thoughtful reader. Had that question been differently decided, who can estimate the results that might have ensued? If the revolutionary party in France had not appealed to the sword, and called to its aid the spirit of military enthusiasm, — if its leaders had discountenanced a resort to such an organized form of mere barbarian force, and had earnestly and perseveringly endeavoured to preserve peace in their relations with other nations, and in the public sentiment of their own people, what an auspicious and beneficent career of freedom and happiness might have been substituted for the extremities of crime, misery, and ruin to which they were so rapidly swept!

“ We have already seen that the Statesmen and Revolutionists, Constitutionals and Girondists, Aristocrats and Jacobins, were all in favor of war. War was, in the eyes of all, an appeal to destiny, and the impatient spirit of France wished that it would pronounce at once, either by victory or defeat. Victory seemed to France the sole issue by which she could extricate herself from her difficulties at home, and even defeat did not terrify her. She believed in the necessity of war, and defied even death. Robespierre thought otherwise, and it is for that reason that he was Robespierre.

“ He clearly comprehended two things; the first, that war was a gratuitous crime against the people; the second, that a war, even though successful, would ruin the cause of democracy. Robespierre looked on the Revolution as the rigorous application of the principles of philosophy to society. A passionate and devoted pupil of Jean Jacques Rousseau, the *Contrat Social* was his gospel; war, made with the blood of the people, was in the eyes of this philosopher — what it must ever be in the eyes of the wise — wholesale slaughter to gratify the ambition of a few, glorious only when it is defensive. Robespierre did not consider France placed in such a position as to render it absolutely necessary for her safety that the human vein should be opened, whence would flow such torrents of blood. Imbued with a firm conviction of the omnipotence of the new ideas on which he nourished faith and fanaticism within a heart closed against intrigue, he did not fear that a few fugitive princes, destitute of credit, and some thousand aristocratic émigrés, would impose laws or conditions on a nation whose first struggle for liberty had shaken the throne, the nobility, and the clergy. Neither did he think that the disunited and wavering powers of Europe would venture to declare war against a nation that proclaimed peace, so long as we did not attack them.

But should the European cabinets be sufficiently mad to attempt this new crusade against human reason, then Robespierre fully believed they would be defeated; for he knew that there lies invincible force in the justice of a cause, that right doubles the energy of a nation, that despair often supplies the want of weapons, and that God and men were for the people.

“He thought, moreover, that if it was the duty of France to propagate the advantages and the light of reason and liberty, the natural and peaceful extension of the French Revolution in the world would prove far more infallible than our arms, — that the Revolution should be a doctrine, and not an universal monarchy realized by the sword, — and that the patriotism of nations should not coalesce against his dogmata. Their strength was in their minds, for in his eyes the power of the Revolution lay in its enlightenment. But he understood more: he understood that an offensive war would inevitably ruin the Revolution, and annihilate that premature republic of which the Girondists had already spoken to him, but which he himself could not as yet define. Should the war be unfortunate, thought he, Europe will crush without difficulty beneath the tread of its armies the earliest germs of this new government, to the truth of which perhaps a few martyrs might testify, but which would find no soil from whence to spring anew. If fortunate, military feeling, the invariable companion of aristocratic feeling, — honor, that religion that binds the soldier to the throne, — discipline, that despotism of glory, would usurp the place of those stern virtues to which the exercise of the constitution would have accustomed the people; — then they would forgive every thing, even despotism, in those who had saved them. The gratitude of a nation to those who have led its children to victory is a pitfall in which the people will ever be ensnared, — nay, they even offer their necks to the yoke; civil virtues must ever fade before the brilliancy of military exploits. Either the army would return to surround the ancient royalty with all its strength, and France would have her Monk, or the army would crown the most successful of its generals, and liberty would have her Cromwell. In either case, the Revolution escaped from the people, and lay at the mercy of the soldiery, and thus to save it from war was to save it from a snare. These reflections decided him; as yet he meditated no violence; he but saw into the future, and read it aright. This was the original cause of his rupture with the Girondists; their justice was but policy, and war appeared to them politic. Just or unjust, they wished for it as a means of destruction to the throne, of aggrandizement for themselves. Posterity must decide, if in this great quarrel the first blame lies on the side of the democrat, or the ambitious Girond-

ists. This fierce contest, destined to terminate in the death of both parties, began on the 12th of December, at a meeting of the Jacobin Club." — Vol. I. pp. 304 – 306.

Perhaps the lesson which the history of liberty in the Old World proclaims from all its pages, and which is repeated again and again in the New, will at last be received. When politicians bring on war, they must pay the penalty. In republics, if civilians wish to retain their just influence as statesmen, they must preserve peace. War always has given, and, as Robespierre so clearly predicted in reference to France, always will give, in our own and in every free country, ascendancy to military reputation. Snatching the prizes of political ambition from the politician, it will carry the successful general to the seats of power. In some respects it is well that it should be so. If party leaders could secure the popularity and patronage that belong to war, and still divide among themselves the spoils of office, and arrange the order of their succession to the government of the country, we might reasonably consider the prospect of peace, prosperity, and freedom darkened over. Elsewhere, the sword drawn for liberty has turned against it. Here, the lesson is repeated in another form. War inflicts a mortal blow, not upon the liberty of the people, we trust, but upon the political party that makes it. Some of the politicians who pushed this country into the war of 1812 still live to brood over the fact, that that war raised up military chieftains who clutched from their grasp the Presidential crown which otherwise would have encircled their brows in sure succession. It is a most instructive circumstance in our history, that when James Madison, then at the head of the government, manifested a reluctance to favor a declaration of war with England, a committee of three was despatched from a Republican caucus to communicate to him the determination of that party to insist upon the measure. The experienced wisdom of that great statesman was overruled and constrained by the short-sighted zeal of less wary politicians. Of that caucus Henry Clay and John C. Calhoun were the master spirits, and of that committee they were members. Although quite young men, they had, by their genius and eloquence, even then acquired the greatest degree of popularity that can be attained in the sphere of statesmanship. The whole nation was waiting, with admiring eagerness, to confer upon them,

one after the other, its highest honor. They had their way, and war was declared. When the revolutionary series of Presidents was brought to a close, on the retirement of James Munroe, the hero of New Orleans took from Mr. Clay so many of the electoral votes of the West, and from Mr. Calhoun, so many of the votes of the South and the Middle States, as to leave them both distanced in the race. The popularity of Jackson only yielded to that of the hero of Tippecanoe; and a fresh crop of military chieftains has just been reared, to destroy, in all probability, the last chance of these veteran aspirants for the great prize. It is not the least of the eminent services they have rendered their country, that, in their baffled ambition, the distinguished statesmen and truly great men whom we have named teach to all coming times the salutary lesson, that, if politicians will have war, they must step aside for ever from the path of honor, and relinquish the posts of power to overshadowing rivals, created by their own suicidal hands. It is not unlikely, as just intimated, that the lesson will be corroborated by the political results of the war in which the country is now involved. Let us hope that it may make a deep and durable impression upon that class of persons whom it so vitally concerns. When the leaders of parties become convinced, that in promoting warlike measures and a military spirit, they are digging their own graves, we may confidently rely upon perpetual peace.

Another lesson taught by the French Revolution, and taught with terrific clearness, was the power of organized associations, operating upon popular sentiment. Under different names, public opinion — called, when it is intended to commend it, the voice of the people, but denominated mob law, when its developments are condemned — is a mighty power, generated in masses of men, which deserves to be profoundly considered in all free countries. This power was evoked in its utmost strength, as an implement in the hands of those who raised, and for a while ruled, the storm in France. Lamartine describes it, to the life, in the following passage.

“The whole of France was but one vast sedition: anarchy swayed the state, and in order that it might be, as it were, self-governed, it had created its government in as many clubs as there were large municipalities in the kingdom. The dominant club was that of the Jacobins: this club was the centralization of

anarchy. So soon as a powerful and high-passioned will moves a nation, their common impulse brings men together ; individuality ceases, and the legal or illegal association organizes the public prejudice. Popular societies thus have birth. At the first menaces of the court against the States General, certain Breton deputies had a meeting at Versailles, and formed a society to detect the plots of the court and assure the triumphs of liberty : its founders were Siéyès, Chapelier, Barnave, and Lameth. After the 5th and 6th of October, the Breton Club, transported to Paris in the train of the National Assembly, had there assumed the more forcible name of 'Society of the Friends of the Constitution.' It held its sittings in the old convent of the Jacobins Saint Honoré, not far from the Manège, where the National Assembly sat. The deputies, who had founded it at the beginning for themselves, now opened their doors to journalists, revolutionary writers, and finally to all citizens. The presentation by two of its members, and an open scrutiny as to the moral character of the person proposed, were the sole conditions of admission : the public was admitted to the sittings by inspectors, who examined the admission card. A set of rules, an office, a president, a corresponding committee, secretaries, an order of the day, a tribune, and orators, gave to these meetings all the forms of deliberative assemblies : they were assemblies of the people, only without elections and responsibility ; feeling alone gave them authority : instead of framing laws, they formed opinion.

"The sittings took place in the evening, so that the people should not be prevented from attending in consequence of their daily labor : the acts of the National Assembly, the events of the moment, the examination of social questions, frequently accusations against the king, ministers, the *côté droit*, were the texts of the debates. Of all the passions of the people, their hatred was the most flattered ; they made it suspicious in order to subject it. Convinced that all was conspiring against it, — king, queen, court, ministers, authorities, foreign powers, — it threw itself headlong into the arms of its defenders. The most eloquent in its eyes was he who inspired it with most dread — it had a parching thirst for denunciations, and they were lavished on it with prodigal hand." — Vol. i. pp. 33, 34.

When men are assembled in crowded meetings, we behold one of the deep and portentous mysteries of our nature, in the contagious flame that is enkindled throughout the entire company, melting their passions into one which flows through the breasts of all, and the whole body, thus divested

of the restraining and resisting power of individual reason and will, is swayed to and fro, and borne to any extreme. In such circumstances, each person is transformed into an irresponsible agent; and sentiments, impulses, extravagances, to which, in a solitary and independent sphere, he would be entirely superior, gain possession and control of his bosom. The strength of purpose and passion thus generated is immeasurably greater than the aggregate strength of all the individuals that compose the assembly. And when a whole people, in associations gathered at different points, but identified by the magnetic wires of sympathy, is brought under this influence, the combined result is a power of will which nothing can withstand.

We are inclined to think that the surest test of the advancement of society towards true refinement is the degree to which individuals are raised beyond the reach of the multitude, and the sacred supremacy of the reason and intellect of each private person is guarded against the ruthless encroachments of blind and intoxicated popular excitements. The true theory of political freedom is the limitation of the power of society. It is the dictate of wisdom, and the safeguard of liberty, to disarm the mob. For certain purposes, and to a certain extent, individuals must yield themselves up to be controlled and guided by the general will. These purposes are described, and this extent is defined, among us, by constitutions of civil government, established by the compact and consent of the people. The more the action of social power is confined to the channels opened for it in these constitutions, the better. Beyond them, it is desirable that individuals should be guided by their own several preferences and inclinations. To secure and preserve such independence of character, a careful and suspicious watch must be kept upon the power of society. It is, in fact, the only tyranny that can obtain a foothold in this country, and there is reason to apprehend that it has already obtained one. The most impartial and well-disposed persons who travel among us concur in noticing indications of its existence and operation. It leads to the suppression of freedom of utterance and discussion. It has generated a timidity and indecision, pervading the style of conversation in the most educated circles of society, and has rendered frankness and strength of speech a marked and startling eccentricity of manner. The fear of giving

offence stifles the best judgments of men, and substitutes for the good sense that actually pervades the community, but which is awed into silence, the narrow, superficial, untenable theories and declamations of a bigoted fanaticism, which, in reality, is approved by the convictions of quite a small faction, in either the literary or political community. It sometimes happens, no doubt, that the result to which many come by conference is wiser than the counsels of individuals. But this always occurs when the parties conferring have been kept free from the influence of the sympathetic excitement, or whatever may be its best descriptive expression, of the passion that is developed by the congregation of many. As the effect of true wisdom is to disclose more and more the doubts that hang over every question and the difficulties that embarrass every movement, and thereby produce and deepen a sentiment of humble diffidence of ourselves and respectful toleration of the judgments of others, it invariably happens that the wisest men fall behind the public confidence in matters involved in general excitement, and conducted in associations and assemblages ; while the superficial, unreflecting, and ignorant, taking no thought either of the lessons of experience or the contingencies of the future, by their vehement assurance and headlong zeal, get in front of the popular sentiment, and assume its direction. They are sure to acquire predominating influence. Under their rash and blundering guidance, the best of causes soon becomes perverted, flies from the track of reason, truth, and right, plunges from one stage of violence to another, and continually severs itself from the support and sympathy of intelligent, moderate, and just persons, until it explodes at last in a frenzy of delirious fanaticism.

There is another lesson taught by the French Revolution which may be profitably considered at the present time. Those who raised and conducted it were almost altogether social theorists and speculative philanthropists. Their own minds were inflamed, and they inflamed the minds of others, with the most sanguine visions of liberty, equality, and universal prosperity and happiness. They were captivated by ideal scenes of political felicity. Disregarding all prescriptive titles and obligations, all established law and authority, they recognized only the general principles of absolute right and truth, as existing in their own minds, and re-

solved to reduce every form of government and social institution into an agreement with them. Circumstances gave them an opportunity to show the consequences, when men undertake to tear down the fabric of society in order to reconstruct it according to their own theoretic views of justice, liberty, and order.

If the absolute right were an independent and distinct object or existence, that is, if it existed in a form and shape, external to all particular minds, and on which all could turn and look, then might men endeavour to frame their institutions in precise conformity with it. But, in point of fact, the right, truth, justice, and, in short, whatever we characterize as general ideas, exist only in the minds of men or other moral beings, and in each mind with different degrees and sorts of apprehension. The consequence is, that when many persons, acting together, profess and imagine themselves to be acting upon the same principles, because they use the same terms, they are in reality acting upon different principles, according as those terms signify different combinations of thought and sentiment in their several minds. Hence, collision, confusion, contention, arise. Passions are roused; intolerance is evoked; violence ensues. Each individual, identifying his own views of righteousness with the absolute and supreme law to which alone they severally and all acknowledge allegiance, becomes utterly uncompromising. The authority of absolute right and truth, of course, overrides all other authority, nullifies all other obligation; and he who makes it the only rule of his actions follows his own ideas wherever they lead him. The law of the land, the institutions of society, sacred as well as political, the most venerable and universally received axioms and sentiments, the word of holy writ, the voice of revelation itself, all temporal and personal consequences to himself or to others, are for ever disregarded and defied. The French Revolution stands forth in the annals of mankind, an awful monument and exhibition of the consequences that naturally ensue, nay, of the results that must follow, when a people rebels against the established order of society, tramples upon the authority of civil law, discards the sentiment of allegiance to government, and pursues, with an entire abandonment, what is called the absolute right.

If, in our own country, the ideas on these subjects which

as yet are happily confined to a few speculative theorists and unreflecting fanatics, were to pervade the population generally, the entire structure of society, all the securities of property and order, would fall at once to the ground. It is time for men of reflection to look deeply into this subject, and to exert themselves to rectify and keep right the public sentiment respecting it. The only danger that threatens our political institutions, and through them the very existence of civilization, is the prevalence in certain fashionable circles of literature, and the diffusion thence through all the channels of popular reading, of false metaphysics. Errors, once exploded, are again circulating under new names, and, thus disguised, are fraudulently claiming the attractive merit of novelty and originality. Fanciful abstractions and artificial general terms have before usurped the authority of truth. The Baconian philosophy expelled them for ever from the departments of physical science. They have not yet been wholly dislodged from moral and political science. That achievement remains to be accomplished. The old controversy of the Nominalists and Realists is to be waged once more to a final issue. What are mere names, words used only for convenience, expressive of generalizations which as such have no actual existence, must again be shown to have no claim to the character of realities. The phantoms of language must be dispelled from the sphere of human knowledge, and none but real things be allowed to wear the honors of philosophy, or to take to themselves the sacred name of truth.

Truth, right, justice, love, worshipped as absolute existences, are idols. Their only real essence is in God ; and, derived from him, in the souls of his children. Their only perfect and adorable existence is in God. They are possessed of supreme authority only as they exist in unerring perfection in Him. In matters that relate to ourselves, as insulated individuals, they are to be obeyed with reverent allegiance, when they utter their edicts through our own souls, in all cases in which we are not provided with an express communication of the Divine will. But respecting interests in which others participate, of a social and political nature, it is dangerous to introduce or to countenance the practice of appealing to the authority of abstract ideas. There will always be more or less opposition to the decisions

of those who frame the laws. Things will be done, policies adopted, provisions enacted, very much against the judgment of numerous minorities. Unless individuals yield, and continue faithfully to render, their allegiance, when occasionally overruled, they cannot demand or expect it from others when they rule, and all government, law, order, security, and civilization, the entire social state, must come to an end. If each individual's sense of right is to prevail over the law, when the two happen to be in conflict, the result will be, that the law will bind only those whose private views it expresses, and becomes of course a perfect nonentity.

The question, then, arises, What shall be done, when unrighteous institutions, political establishments adverse to freedom, justice, and truth, exist over and around us? If unwise and oppressive laws are enacted, — if the policy of the government is, to our apprehension, in violation of the great principles of the moral law, — what shall we do? There are two courses that may be taken, and we are to choose one or the other.

We may enforce a direct application of our ideas of absolute right and truth to the institutions and order of society, and demolish whatever is repugnant to them, at every hazard, however deeply rooted, or however complicated by manifold tissues with the existing and transmitted state of things. This is one course. The French Revolution is the most conspicuous instance of it in history. But all the other instances were of the same character, and terminated in similar disastrous results. There is no case where men have attempted to pull down and remodel the fabric of society, to adapt it to any speculative and abstract notions or schemes, that has not proved an utter and ruinous failure.

The other method is, withholding the hand of violence, to rely upon gradual efforts, made in a spirit of patience and moderation; to devote our energies to the promotion of knowledge and virtue, of a cultivated intelligence and benevolent affections through the bosom of society, trusting to them to transmute insensibly, as is the case with the processes of the great laws of nature, and with a silent interior energy, the institutions of society into forms of benignity, freedom, and righteousness. To give an opportunity for this influence to diffuse itself, all extravagance of action or of language must be avoided. The public mind must not be irritated or dis-

tempered by keeping it fixed upon the contemplation of existing evils, but a hopeful spirit must be breathed into it. The efforts of philanthropy and benevolence ought to be to clothe their cause with the strength of encouragement ; and to invigorate the hearts of those who work together for good with the only energy that can secure success, — an energy that may be literally said to descend from heaven itself, — derived from an assurance that Providence is working with them, and that therefore all is well and going on well. If those who love their race, and desire to promote its freedom and happiness, direct their efforts, in this spirit, to purify and sweeten the fountain-head of all social and political life, in the minds and hearts of individuals, their labors will not be in vain. The hope of mankind is, not in what may be done in the political sphere, which, among us particularly, occupies a much more inconsiderable portion of human experience than is imagined, but in education, in refinement of manners and sentiments, in prosperous industry, in a cheerful, genial, and beneficent tone of feeling, and in the purifying and elevating power of moral and religious truth. Let these things be sought after, and just laws, free institutions, and good government will necessarily follow. In the mean while, it is essential to preserve, throughout the community, the principle and sentiment of allegiance to the state, which will become more important and valuable, as a gradual amelioration of the laws, and an increasing conformity of the government to the improving character of the people, will more and more justify and deserve that allegiance.

ART. IV. — 1. *Nieboska Komedya*. Paryż. 1835.

2. *Przedświt*. Paryż. 1845.

“ THIS literature, more than the existing literature of any people, deserves the attention of serious men ; for this, above all other, bears upon itself the stamp of reality. It is serious, earnest, noble ; — noble both by the spirit which inspires it, and the aim after which it strives. Every work is at the same time a deed. It is the life of the man himself that animates